

viva venezuela!

■ Vol 5 ■ Issue 1 ■ Spring 2015



No to US Sanctions on Venezuela!

No More Pinochets in Latin America!

Also inside:

■ Economic Changes Announced

■ US destabilisation in Latin America: Chile 1973, Venezuela today

■ Rally for Venezuela

With thanks to

T THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS
STANDING UP FOR YOU

www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk
e: info@venezuelasolidarity.co.uk

**Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**



Social Progress Vs. Right-Wing Reaction

President Maduro used his annual address to announce a number of measures to fight back against right wing, anti-democratic destabilisation in Venezuela and stress the extraordinary similarity between the 'economic war' that has been unleashed against Venezuela and the destabilisation plans that led to the overthrow of Allende in Chile in 1973.



President Maduro leads massive march against US sanctions

These measures (see page 4) included a US\$911 million Plan for Development and Infrastructure, a rise in the minimum wage to help counter the effects of inflation, 400,000 new homes and reforms to the exchange rate system.

Days earlier, after opposition leader Henrique Capriles called for a change in government, the President had warned that the right-wing opposition is trying to create conditions which could lead to a coup, similar to the 2002 attempt to overthrow the late Hugo Chávez: "They are using the same script: economic warfare, campaigns to promote social unrest, rumours of a coup d'etat. They have the same objective that they had throughout 2001, 2002 and 2003."

In recent months, a series of raids on distributing companies revealed that they were hoarding products to generate shortages – an example of those opposed to the democratic government using their economic power to try to weaken Maduro's support and justify the ousting of the government – as was done in Chile in the run up to the 1973 coup. This echoes the strategy of President Nixon to "make the economy scream" to "prevent Allende from coming to power or to unseat him."

Additionally, in the first half of 2014, 42 Venezuelans died following the violent protests that followed the explicit call from elements of

the Right for the undemocratic and unconstitutional ousting (*La Salida*) of the elected government. The principal causes were lethal opposition violence and the use of deliberately dangerous street barricades.

President Maduro's warning also comes against the background of new US sanctions against Venezuela, which were signed by President Obama in December (see pages 6-7) .

As well as creating diplomatic barriers, these sanctions could prompt violence, according to Government Minister Rafael Ramirez, who says the move sends a message to violent right-wing groups that they can continue with acts of destabilisation.

Washington's antipathy toward Venezuela is not new. It is well known that Washington supported the coup in 2002 but US efforts did not end there. Over 12 years US government agencies have provided well over \$100 million to opposition groups.

Perhaps that's not surprising as Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world. But it should not be tolerated.

All supporters of social progress and national sovereignty around the world should join Latin America and many others across the world in condemning both external intervention and anti-democratic, right-wing destabilisation plans including the 'economic war.'

This magazine is published by the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

Contributors to this issue were:

- Lee Brown
- Paul Dobson
- Francisco Dominguez
- Siân Errington
- Sue Grey
- Ewan Robertson
- Matt Willgress *and*
- Tim Young



Venezuela Solidarity Campaign



**Unite the Union GPM London Print Branch
Celebrate Venezuela - Unity is Strength**

John Ayling, Branch Chair
Tommy Murphy, Branch Secretary



Massive Stockpile of Hoarded Goods Uncovered in Venezuela

A company with links to the right-wing Venezuelan party Popular Will was recently discovered to have a massive stockpile of essential goods, such as nappies, toilet paper, and cleaning supplies, Vice-President Jorge Arreaza (pictured with the goods) announced. Venezuela's Government and social movements accuse groups, including some businesses, of hoarding goods in order to destabilise the government as part of an 'economic war.'



Venezuelan Vice President Jorge Arreaza speaks to the press regarding the discovery.



The warehouse full of essential items was discovered in the western state of Zulia

China Commits \$20 Billion to Venezuela for Investment

As President Maduro Embarks on World Tour To Counter Oil Price Slump

China has agreed to invest \$20 billion in Venezuela following the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States summit. Venezuelan officials hope that increased Chinese investment will offset some of the shortfalls in the economy due to decade-low oil prices.

Xi Jinping, the Chinese president pledged US\$250 billion in new investment in Latin America over the next decade.

The first billion dollar tranche of this Chinese investment is to build new schools in Venezuela, following the recent national

consultation on education, in which more than 7 million people participated.

After his trip to China, the Venezuelan President continued on an "international tour" to round up more economic support in the face of the oil price slump, visiting Algeria, Iran, Qatar, Portugal, Russia and Saudi Arabia, to advance international economic co-operation, saying in Algeria that talks had a "focus on OPEC and the importance of guaranteeing the stability of oil prices". He also highlighted fracking as a cause for the market woes, adding, "we should eliminate fracking because it is destructive."

Venezuela Elected to UN Security Council "to Defend World Peace"

January marked Venezuela becoming a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, a first for the country. President Nicolas Maduro, said Venezuela "will take part with the utmost responsibility to defend world peace."

Venezuela was elected to the position of non-permanent member in October, with 181 countries out of 193 voting in favour.

"Venezuela will be representing the voice of peace, the voice of the pluri-polar world, representing Latin America's voice as a united bloc [in] defence of a peaceful world, without weapons of mass destruction, free from colonialism, [and] that promotes human rights," said President Maduro, adding that "this election is a reason for pride in all Venezuelans."



President Maduro in Portugal

President Maduro Tells US V.P Biden to Respect Venezuela

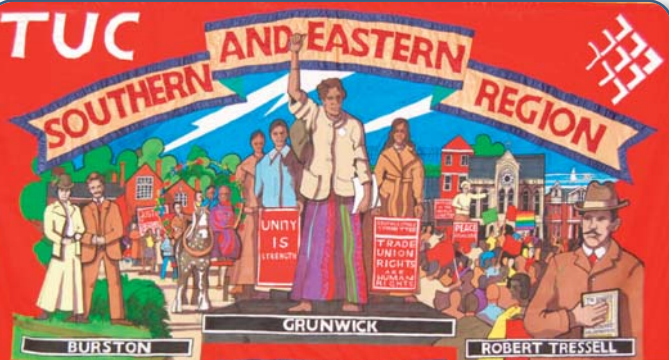
Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro had a brief, spontaneous meeting (which he described as "cordial") with US Vice-President Joe Biden, following the inauguration of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff. Referring to the sanctions recently imposed by the US, Maduro reiterated the need for the US to respect Venezuela.



"What do we ask of the United States? I told Vice President Biden – and have said it 1,000 times in public and in private – we want respectful relations, nothing more," Maduro explained.

TUC

SOUTHERN AND EASTERN REGION



Solidarity greetings from SERTUC to all working for a world fit for all people

Martin Gould
Regional President

Megan Dobney
Regional Secretary

020 7467 1220 sertuc@tuc.org.uk



Key Announcements Made on Venezuela's Economy

President Nicolas Maduro used his January Annual Address to make a series of announcements explaining that Venezuela will undergo a change in economic policies to combat the "economic war" being waged against it and address the sharp drop in the price of oil. Summing up the policies, he argued they will maintain and improve public services despite the economic difficulties currently being faced. Since oil exports make up 95% of Venezuela's GDP, falling oil prices have a strong impact on the economy.

Referring to 2014, he said that the violent 'La Salida' campaign, which cost the economy billions of dollars in damages, "was the most violent attempt to overthrow the government since the coup attempt of 2002." The second half of the year had brought an "escalation of the economic war" through the sabotage of the economy by sections of big business aligned with the right-wing opposition seeking to use their economic power – as in Allende's Chile – to undermine the elected Government.

The concurrent dramatic drop in oil prices is also seen as part of a wider attack from the US and their allies. The President suggested that it

is preventing OPEC agreeing any reduction in production, arguing that "their goal is to destroy OPEC, destroy oil prices... which will have other collateral effects that will be disastrous for the South [and] for the world."

In response to these developments, the Government has outlined a two-year plan aimed at "changing the economic model." Its economic reforms emphasise increases in production, public investment, social programmes, fairer prices and greater planning to protect people's standards of living. Specific measures aim to further tackle hoarding and contraband. Among the reforms announced in the Annual Address are changes to the currency



Venezuelan TV gave live coverage of the President's Annual Address

system, maintaining the official exchange rate at 6.3 Bolivares to the dollar and subjecting other non-state transactions to a floating market rate, with two other exchange rates for private investment through auctions and through public and private stock exchanges.

Also announced were a US\$911 million Plan for Development and Infrastructure; a 15% increase for the minimum wage to help counter the effects of inflation; better education provisions, including funding for more university scholarships; granting pensions to 300,000 more people; and the building of 400,000 homes in 2015.

**In Solidarity with
Venezuela – continuing to
show there is an alternative!**



**Unite the Union
London & Eastern Region**

33-7 Moreland Street,
London EC1V 8BB

Jim Kelly Peter Kavanagh
Chair Regional Secretary



**Greetings and
solidarity**

from Britain's largest
teachers' union –
the National Union of
Teachers



US destabilisation in Latin America: Chile 1973, Venezuela today

Dr. Francisco Dominguez is the author of a book examining right wing strategies against Latin American governments, and is himself a political refugee from the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile that came to power via a coup in 1973. He was interviewed by *Telesur* about comparisons between Chile then and Venezuela today.

Question: *Many have drawn parallels with the situation in Venezuela today and the build-up to the coup in Chile in 1973. Do you see parallels?*

Francisco: The first is that the main source of the destabilisation is the United States. The script is very similar. The idea is to "make the economy scream", to use Nixon's infamous phrase.

They also finance the internal opposition. Through their control of their distribution system, commerce, trade and so on, they can engage in hoarding so as to make the population suffer. The idea is to make the situation so difficult that people end up regretting having elected a Left government.

Q: *Can you give some detail of how the economic war in Chile was organised in the build-up to the coup?*

FD: They went first of all for stopping the public transport system, which was run by private companies, particularly the goods distribution system.

Secondly, they hoarded vital daily consumption items such as flour, vegetable oil, coffee and milk. They hoarded anything that they could make the population suffer with. Basically the idea was to provoke, deliberately, queues outside shops, and then, once these queues were created, they would use the discontent of the population to cause disturbances.

Q: *How is economic warfare being organised in Venezuela today?*

FD: What they have done is to use their control over private sector distribution to enable hoarding of targeted items. These are items of mass consumption in order to make sure parts of the population suffer the consequences, in order to sow discontent.



The second aspect of it is to engage in massive contraband to bordering states, speculating on the different exchange rate. According to one of the ministers, about 30% of the agricultural produce that is in Venezuela actually ends up in Colombia. Millions of litres of gasoline have been contrabanded too.

The third one is currency speculation. Venezuela has different exchange rates for the dollar. People obtain dollars at the official, very low rate by claiming they are going to use them for valid business purposes, but instead they end up selling them on the black market for a massive profit. And now, the US, in cahoots with Saudi Arabia, has been producing a glut of oil in the world market, in order to bring down the price, thereby making things much more complicated. So there you have a very clear, well-orchestrated and well-organised economic war which is producing severe complications in the Venezuelan economy and for the rest of Latin America.

GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

GMB supports **democracy** &
social **progress** in Venezuela
and the work of the
Venezuela Solidarity Campaign



Tim Roache
REGIONAL SECRETARY

Andy Irving
REGIONAL PRESIDENT

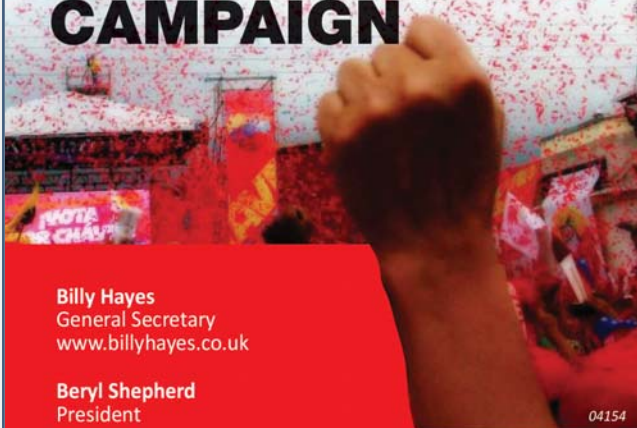
Go online:
www.gmbbyorkshire.org.uk

Tel: 0845 337 7777

GMB
GMB@WORK

CWU
The communications union

**THE CWU
SUPPORTS
THE VENEZUELA
SOLIDARITY
CAMPAIGN**



Billy Hayes
General Secretary
www.billyhayes.co.uk

Beryl Shepherd
President

www.cwu.org  

04154

Venezuela & Latin America Lead the

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has been joined by numerous regional leaders and bodies in leading the Global South's angry rejection of new sanctions against his nation signed into law by US President Barack Obama in December.

The Venezuela Defence of Human Rights and Civil Society Act, earlier agreed by the US Congress and Senate at the behest of Republican right-wingers amongst others, authorises sanctions against Venezuelan officials and calls for a US government strategy to increase funding for and availability of anti-government media in Venezuela, including utilising the *Voice of America* for this end. This opens the way for even more U.S support for the right-wing opposition.

Responding to the sanctions, Nicolas Maduro said: "President Obama has taken a false step against our country by signing the sanctions, despite the national and continental rejection of them.

and on the other hand he has started a stage of increased aggressions against (Venezuela). These are the contradictions of an empire that tries to impose its domination in whatever way it sees fit, underestimating the strength and awareness of our homeland," he added.

In the *New York Times*, Venezuela's National Assembly president Diosdado Cabello argued that: "In Cuba, a decades-long trade embargo caused great hardship but failed to realise the US objective of ending the Cuban revolution.

"The UN's many votes to lift the embargo exposed how isolated Washington had been in its policy. It would be regrettable if sanctions against Venezuela, first opposed by the White House, now became a way for the Obama administration to appease those in Congress who oppose the historic restoration of relations between the United States and Cuba."

Latin America Stands in Solidarity with Venezuela

Since Hugo Chávez's election in 1998, the US government has routinely sought to undermine



Presidents Morales of Bolivia and Correa of Ecuador have been at the forefront of opposing US sanctions

Unite South West

Stands in Solidarity with the people of Venezuela

Peter Hughes SW Regional Secretary	Kevin Terry SW Regional Chair
Jayne Taylor SW EC Member	Mark Thomas SW EC Member

www.unitetheunion.org





FIRE BRIGADES UNION

The professional voice of your firefighters

No to US Sanctions

Solidarity with Venezuela

www.fbu.org.uk [@fbunational](https://twitter.com/fbunational)

Matt Wrack FBU General Secretary
Alan McLean FBU President

Global South in Opposing U.S Sanctions

Venezuela, but has found itself increasingly isolated in Latin America. Today therefore, Venezuela does not face this latest act of hostility alone.

The member states of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) responded that “the application of the unilateral sanctions ... infringes the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states and does not contribute to stability, social peace and democracy in Venezuela.”

Additionally, the countries of the ALBA (Bolivarian Alternatives for the Americas) regional bloc expressed “their absolute support to and solidarity with the people and government of Venezuela,” arguing that the Act “is a smokescreen that paves the way to destabilisation ... opening the gates to an unconstitutional move against the legal and legitimately elected government,” adding that they “will not allow the use of old practices already implemented in countries of the region, aimed at promoting a change of political regime just as was the case in north Africa and in



President Maduro leads massive rally against sanctions

countries of the Middle East.” Highlighting US hypocrisy, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega announced that in response to their role in pioneering the sanctions, US Senator Marco Rubio and Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen had been banned from Nicaraguan territory.

Globally, the G77+China group expressed their rejection, with President Evo Morales of Bolivia stating that “The Group of 77+China reiterates the urgent need to repeal the legislative measure taken against Venezuela which

undermines the UN Charter and international law, especially the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs and equal rights and self-determination of peoples.”

- In Britain, over 80 prominent politicians have signed a statement opposing the sanctions. We need to do all we can to amplify such voices in the months ahead – you can ask your MP to add their name at www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk

North East Yorkshire & Humberside Region

send a message of solidarity
in support of our colleagues
in Venezuela



Unite the Union
North East Yorkshire & Humberside Region

Dick Banks
Regional Chair

Karen Reay
Regional Secretary


unite
the UNION



viva venezuela!

Rally for Venezuela! Celebrating 10 Years of VSC



Join the VSC

- If you join VSC online at: www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk for only £18 you receive a free DVD of Oliver Stone's *South of the Border*. You can also join by cheque for £18 (£9 unwaged) to *Venezuela Solidarity Campaign*, c/o Unite, 33-37 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB.

**Thursday, June 4, 2015, 6:30pm,
Hamilton House (NUT Headquarters),
London, WC1H**

With:

- Tariq Ali ● Jeremy Corbyn MP
 - H.E Alicia Castro (Argentinian Ambassador)
 - Professor Doreen Massey ● Neil Findlay MSP
 - Bethan Jenkins AM (Plaid Cymru)
 - Andy De La Tour (former election observer in Venezuela)
 - Sandra White MSP (SNP) ● Derek Wall (Green Party)
- & more...

Please register in advance at www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk



UNITE STANDS IN SOLIDARTY

with the social progress and
democratic advances of the
Venezuelan people

Len McCluskey, General Secretary
Tony Woodhouse, Chair of GEC



www.unitetheunion.org

**Venezuela
Solidarity
Campaign**

